

Sawbridgeworth Town Council



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MAYOR
Cllr Reece Smith
TOWN CLERK
Christopher Hunt

To: Cllrs E Buckmaster, R Buckmaster, N Parsad-Wyatt, G Rattey, R Smith, S Smith

FINANCE, POLICY and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE









You are invited to a meeting of this committee of the Council which will take place on **Monday 13th January 2025 at the conclusion of the Planning Meeting scheduled at 7:00pm** at Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth for the transaction of the following business.

Town Clerk
7th January 2025

Agenda

- F 24/27** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
[👏] To receive and approve any apologies for absence.
- F 24/28** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive any Declarations of Interest by Members
- F 24/29** **MINUTES**
[👏][📄] To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Finance, Policy and Economic Development Committee held on 16th September 2024 (F02) [Appendix A]
- To attend to any matters arising from these Minutes and not dealt with elsewhere on this Agenda.

Owner	Action	Update
Clerk	The Clerk to explore if the traders would open the What's App group to all councillors	Email sent to Cllr Rattey enquiring if the traders would be happy with this or not.
Clerk	The Clerk to contact Ware Clerk to assess any availability the sustainability officer has they have recently employed.	No capability to assist at this time

- F 24/30 STAFF MATTERS**
 To consider any matters relating to members of staff, Clerks report refers. *[Appendix B]*
- F 24/31 FINANCE MATTERS**
 Budget 2025/26
 To review the draft budget and Clerks report for the year 2025/26; to respond to any written questions put to the Chair of F&P or The Clerk prior to the meeting; to receive any supplementary questions for clarification.
-  To make a recommendation for adoption of the budget by Council.
[Appendix C]
- F 24/32 JUBILEE GARDENS**
 To receive an update on the Jubilee Gardens
Verbal update Cllr R Buckmaster, Town Clerk
- F 24/33 COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT**
 To discuss engagement opportunities for councillors
- Cross border meeting with Sheering Parish Council
- F 24/34 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
 To discuss proposals for promoting economic development in the town:
- Local business working in partnership events.
Verbal update, Cllr Greg Rattey
- F 24/35 POLICY MATTERS**
 To consider any matters relating to policies for the future development of Town Council services to the community.
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- To approve the draft document, Financial Regulations 2025, to make a recommendation for adoption of the Regulations by Council.
 - To approve the draft document, Risk Assessment 2025-2026.
[Appendix D]
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- F 24/36 INCOME and EXPENDITURE REPORT**
 Clerks report for month nine of the 2023/24 financial year.
[Appendix E]
- F 24/37 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**
 For all members of the committee to explore funding opportunities.
- Sawbobus opportunities for sponsorship
 - Jubilee Gardens funding
- F 24/38 REDUCING THE COUNCILS CARBON FOOTPRINT**
 Current update on plan to reduce councils carbon footprint and update on funding expenditure
- F24/39 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**
 To consider any items for inclusion on future agendas.

Appendix A

SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE, POLICY and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes

of the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held at the Chamber, Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth at 78:00pm on **Monday 16th September 2024**.

Those present

Cllr Eric Buckmaster
Cllr Ruth Buckmaster
Cllr Nathan Parsad-Wyatt
Cllr Reece Smith
Cllr Steve Smith

In attendance:

Christopher Hunt - Town Clerk

F 24/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Greg Rattey
[prop Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt sec'd Cllr R Smith]

F 24/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

F 24/17 MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 10th June 2024 (FO1).
[prop Cllr N Parsad-Wyatt sec'd Cllr R Smith]

F 24/18 STAFF MATTERS

To consider any matters relating to members of staff.

The Clerk explained that all interim one to one's were complete and all staff were happy in their roles and no issues were raised. All staff had or have booked leave and long term absences had been recorded.

F 24/19 FINANCE MATTERS

To consider any matters relating to the finances and year end arrangements of the Council.

- To update with on the external audit from PKF Littlejohn. The Clerk reported that the report had been assessed by external auditors and had been returned as all correct and no comments were recorded highlighting any inconsistencies.
- Clerk reported on two variances on expenditure to budgeted figures. One related to fuel used by the spare bus as the Sawbobus was off the road due to repair for an extended period of time. The fuel budgeted for each bus was out of balance but only in the respective records and no extra overall fuel costs had occurred.
- **Noted;** The detailed Income and Expenditure report was attached to the agenda pack and no comment was made on this.
- **Resolved;** The Clerk update on current quotes from brokers, two had been received and one more was expected this week but others had not responded. It was debated and resolved to delegate the selection of the insurance provider to be decided between the Clerk and Cllr Eric Buckmaster as this will be needed prior to the next finance and full town council meeting.
[prop Cllr R Smith sec'd Cllr S Smith]

F 24/20 JUBILEE GARDENS (TOWN GREEN) WORKING PARTY

Update on the current project status, The Clerk reported that pre-planning advice had been sought, and the planning department of EHDC deemed a planning application necessary. It was agreed that this application should be submitted once the revised design is received. Additionally, it was decided to explore whether the project could commence in areas not requiring planning authority approval, such as tree removal, path construction, and planting.

F24/21 COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT

The Clerk explained that the police were working on further engagement initiatives, which presented a valuable opportunity for councillors. Councillor Reece Smith suggested that having officers patrol Bell Street would be more effective in increasing engagement than holding surgeries within the council offices. The Clerk will discuss this proposal with the local officers.

F24/22 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

To discuss proposals for promoting economic development in the town: The Clerk explained that the local business What's App group had been set up by Joanne and Cllr Rattey and he had sent out the first messages last week and the system was working well.

ACTION: The Clerk to explore if the traders would open the What's App group to all councillors

F24/23 POLICY MATTERS

To consider any matters relating to policies for the future development of Town Council services to the community.

The Clerk explained that he is collaborating with his peers on the new financial regulations. Once a draft has been developed, he will present it at the next meeting. The current regulations remain valid until next year.

F24/24 REDUCING THE COUNCILS CARBON FOOTPRINT

To discuss the progress of the the reduction of the councils carbon footprint.

The Clerk explained that the funding for the Hub project had been utilised to purchase an outdoor television and other equipment. These items were used at the "Fun on the Field" event to provide advice on reducing bills and lowering carbon emissions. The company advising the council on key focus areas, Three Acorns, has been contacted for a follow-up, as their report is still pending.

ACTION: The Clerk to contact Ware Clerk to assess any availability the sustainability officer has they have recently employed.

F24/25 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

All opportunities for funding will be explored, nothing was raised at the meeting.

F24/26 ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None raised for this meeting. However, the members wanted an update on the progress for the market being reintroduced to the Town at the full town council meeting at the end of the month.

Appendix B

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

Memorandum from the Town Clerk

To: Finance, Policy and Economic Development Committee
From: Christopher Hunt
Subject: Staff update
Date: 3rd January 2025

All administration staff appraisals have been successfully completed and formally agreed upon at the Appointments and Appraisals Committee. This comprehensive process ensures that all staff members receive the necessary feedback and recognition for their performance over the past year. The outcomes of these appraisals have been documented and will be used to guide future development and training initiatives.

In addition, local government pay increases and increment levels have been thoroughly assessed and agreed upon. These adjustments have been carefully considered and incorporated into this year's budget. This ensures that our financial planning accurately reflects the latest pay scales and increment levels, providing a fair and competitive compensation structure for all employees.

Furthermore, all staff pay has been projected, taking into account the last two years of local government pay increases. This projection includes the necessary back pay, which is often considered and agreed upon late in the financial year. By including these adjustments, we ensure that our budget remains accurate and up-to-date, reflecting the true cost of staffing for the upcoming year.

Appendix C

SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

PAPER FROM THE TOWN CLERK

TO: MEMBERS OF F&P COMMITTEE
FROM: CHRISTOPHER HUNT
SUBJECT: BUDGET 2025-26
DATE: 13TH JANUARY 2025

Purpose of the Budget

The Council must set a budget for the forthcoming year, from which the Council's precept demand is derived. This precept is collected on our behalf by East Herts District Council (EHDC). Therefore, the budget must realistically reflect the Council's plans and ambitions for the next year.

Objective

This budget has been compiled to maintain community services such as community transport, allotments and the cemetery, as well as to complete projects like the Jubilee Gardens. These services will add value to the town, aiming to maintain and improve community and business cohesion.

Overview

'Referendum principles' refer to the government's power to require a local referendum if an authority sets council tax or a precept deemed 'excessive'. These principles have been set annually for principal and major precepting authorities but not for town and parish councils, with the expectation that these councils continue to show restraint when setting their precept figures.

Consideration must be given to the demands placed on the Town Council to provide both statutory services and community-based projects and events, including expanding community events such as VE Day 80. The expansion of managed land and associated assets, such as the Great St Mary's Church grounds maintenance, allotments from the West Road developments, the Jubilee Gardens Project and the Market, must be factored into the budget.

Support previously received from EHDC for community transport is no longer available and this has created a void that will need budgeting to maintain this service. Any change in our precept demand must be seen in the context of the reduction of services from the district council, which directly affects the town. Previously the Sawbobus received funding of £29,000 and now it relies on passenger fares, sponsorship and funding from the precept

Principles:

- All anticipated expenditure is included.
- Only realistic income is included.

Assumptions

Several specific assumptions are annotated on the attached schedule, but some overriding assumptions have been adopted in preparing this proposed budget:

Paper from the Clerk

STC will budget to continue its range of activities and, wherever possible, enhance them for the community's benefit. These are generally in line with the objectives identified in the Town Action Plan.

Policy Decisions

Several policy decisions must be made to validate the proposed budget, falling under several headings:

Establishment

- Remuneration will be limited to the nationally negotiated increase. The budget for 2025/2026 has been drafted using the same principles as the 2023/2024 award (£1,290 per annum on full time salaries, or 2.5% on all salaries SCP43 and above). There are no current plans to alter the establishment staff numbers.

Finance and Policy

- The training budget has been maintained at the reduced cost from the last budget as the Clerks and staff training is up to date.
- A rolling programme of updating office IT will continue, with desktops phased out and replaced with laptops to allow for agile working and reduce the number of computers to be maintained.
- Website development has been maintained at the same price to allow for further updates.
- The precept recommended equates to a 4.95% increase for a band D equivalent home and is in line with current demands and cost of living increases. This is 2.57% less than last year's precept increase of 7.52%.
- There will be no New Homes Bonus, Section 106 income, or income from asset sales.
- IT Support costs have been reduced by £2,000 (13.3%).
- Telephone and broadband costs have decreased by £500 (16.7%) due to a new supplier and contract change.
- Election expenses have been halved from £10,000 to £3,000 (70%) due to the midterm period between elections. £3,000 has been budgeted over 4 years to go to Earmarked Reserves to fund the next election in 2027.
- Freedom of the Town has increased to £1,500 from £1,000 (50%)
- General grants have been combined with Playschemes, to make one single pot (£3,500)

Estates

- The Hailey Centre: The town council is responsible for external decoration and maintenance. Due to the building's age and increasing maintenance requirements, any unspent budget on this will be earmarked.
- External Storage: This is being reviewed, and alternative storage at West Road allotments is being sought to reduce current costs once the site is handed over to the Town Council.

Amenities

- Allotments: Managed at a loss but legally required to be available to the community. Water charges are charged at actual cost to each site and were

Paper from the Clerk

increased where demand and costs are increasing. There are no plans to increase rent charges as we are in line with neighbouring towns.

- The Cemetery remains a source of net income over expenditure predicted at £40,950, with plaques and tree purchasing becoming more popular to commemorate loved ones.
- West Road play area: No new items or repairs from criminal damage have been required, but the current wood equipment is aging. Unspent budgeted money will be earmarked for future liabilities.
- Orchard Management: The town council's responsibility is limited to meeting the conditions of our licence, including an annual cut of the orchard and adjacent meadow. We need to budget for two maintaining cuts per annum to keep it manageable.

Operations

- Bell Street Conveniences: These generate income through payment on use. The rangers complete daily cleaning, and budgeting for repairs is placed in reserves. No recent damage has occurred over the winter school holidays.
- Lawnmower: The current larger lawnmower is old and a replacement is being budgeted for to be funded from Earmarked reserves when needed.
- CCTV: The costs of managing the CCTV system include an annual maintenance and replacement contract. Plans are in place to expand the system along Bell Street, with all old cameras and the new repeater post fitted to allow this expansion.

Events

- Fun on the Field: Very popular with high attendance. Improvements and an increase in the number of stalls may raise income, balanced against first aid requirements, commercial refuse bin, field hire, etc., seeing a slight reduction in cost from £2,300 to £2,000 (-3.1%).
- Christmas Lights Festival: This event has gained a strong local following. The 2024 event was very successful, and returning the event to a Saturday increased footfall. Costs have increased to cover subcontracted labour for setup and breakdown, balanced with an increase in income, showing only a £100 increase from last year. Total cost: £18,400, including £15,000 for Christmas lights.
- River Day: Increased popularity has led to its inclusion in the budget to cover initial expenditure for toilet hire, advertising, and refreshments, with an overall cost of £100 due to increased income.
- RHSO 300 a one off event for 2025 has £500 budgeted to support this.

Projects

- Jubilee Gardens: This project continues to develop, with the fifth year of budgeting at £10k per annum. Match funding has been ringfenced, and authorisation of initial plans is being sought from EHDC for final consultation and planning application.
- Action Plan – The Clerk and Cllr Angus Parsad-Wyatt have met to discuss how the budget and plan are linked. Below are quotes from residents concerns and how the budget overlaps with these.
 - Access to Green Open Spaces – Jubilee Gardens project funding
 - Community Events – investment has been put towards annual events
 - Maintenance of the Cemetery – the cemetery receives a heavy investment but also produces income to ensure the high standards are maintained.
 - Personal feeling of safety – CCTV has earmarked investment for expansion

Paper from the Clerk

- Cleanliness of our streets – close working with EHDC staff and Rangers to make quick interventions when required, rangers tools and salary work towards this
- Maintenance of footpaths, parks and play areas – Play equipment repairs and replacements are funded. Rangers are equipped with lawn mowers and strimmer's etc to complete maintenance.
- Allotments – new allotment site and the current four are all considered for this budget.
- Town Councillor communication – events, energy hub and investment in the town council website link in with this point.
- Air Quality – the **Three acorns report** detailing the Councils own carbon footprint and objectives has been invested in. The reserves show funding for an electric bus, improved planting and open space in the Jubilee Gardens. Moving to less waste, recycled paper, alternative greener energy suppliers and closer management of utilities. Ranger's tools with petrol engines will be replaced with battery powered equipment and banking will be switched to a greener company. Wildflower meadows and increasing tree planting is all linked into the year's budget.

Civic Events

- Remembrance Day: Production of service sheets and managing logistics.
- Mayor's Civic Service: Liaison with churches and production of the programme of events.
- Mayor's Civic Dinner: The mayor's formal dinner, reciprocating civic dinners arranged by neighbouring towns and district and county councils.

Community Buses

- Sawbobus: Completed another year with minimal funding but increased sponsorship and passenger donations of £1 per day. The second bus serves as a replacement for Sawbobus during maintenance and repairs and is available for hire by local groups to generate further income.

There is currently £87,944 in earmarked reserve EMR320 for a replacement bus, deemed sufficient for a new bus. Therefore, no amount has been budgeted for this in 2025/26.

Reserves Reserves are predominantly earmarked for several projects, including Jubilee Gardens, a new bus, replacement lawn mower, cemetery development, elections, and war memorial repairs. This currently sits at £206,784, including the £50,000 EHDC grant for Jubilee Gardens. The general reserve is predicted to be £125,000 at the financial year-end, with total reserves of £347,584.

Summary Income will be enhanced by:

- The cemetery.
- Obtaining grants wherever possible.
- Sponsorship.

Expenditure will be contained by:

- Reducing subcontracted work.
- Exploring new storage options.

Paper from the Clerk

- Reducing budgeted funds for office improvements as most are completed.
- Fixing utility costs for the civic centre.

Reserves will be managed close to recommended levels by:

- Setting a balanced budget.
- Applying any proceeds from excess income over expenditure.

Proposed Budget The proposed budget recommends a precept for 2025/26 of £479,835 (2024/25: £452,775). This is an increase of 4.95% (£5.46pa) on Band D equivalent housing and equates to £2.23 per week or £0.32 per day.

Actions for Members The budget can be fine-tuned, but members should consider the following in the budget debate:

- Do you want to continue with the current level of services?
- Will the budget stand up to scrutiny?
- Are you happy to justify the budget to precept payers?

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
Staff						
100	Staff					
	Salaries	223,855	243,480	253,219	263,348	
4035	NIC - Employers	22,100	31,270	32,521	33,822	41.5%
4040	Pension - Employers	29,745	32,070	33,353	34,687	7.8%
	Expenditure	275,700	306,820	319,093	331,857	11.3%
Finance & Policy						
200	General Administration					
1076	Precept					
1090	Interest Received	5,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	20.0%
	Income	5,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	20.0%
4070	Subscriptions	2,500	2,860	2,917	2,976	14.4%
4075	IT Support	15,000	13,000	13,260	13,525	-13.3%
4080	Training (Members)	500	500	510	520	0.0%
4081	All Travel Exes	550	550	561	572	0.0%
4082	Training (Staff)	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
4083	Clerks Exes	0	100	102		
4090	IT Development	1,600	1,500	1,530	1,561	-6.3%
4095	Photocopy Charges	1,500	1,500	1,530	1,561	0.0%
4100	Telephone/Broadband	3,000	2,500	2,550	2,601	-16.7%
4105	Postage	900	800	816	832	-11.1%
4110	Stationery	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
4115	Insurance	10,000	11,000	11,220	11,444	10.0%
4120	Bank Charges	500	500	510	520	0.0%
4125	Repairs and Renewals	750	750	765	780	0.0%
4130	Staff Care	1,500	1,600	1,632	1,665	6.7%
4135	Office Care	3,000	3,000	3,060	3,121	0.0%
4140	Office Equipment	1,500	1,500	1,530	1,561	0.0%
4180	Accountancy Services	3,000	3,000	3,060	3,121	0.0%
4185	Audit	3,565	3,565	3,600	3,672	0.0%
4190	Professional Fees	6,000	6,000	5,000	5,100	0.0%
4195	Tourism	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
4200	Web-site	1,500	1,500	1,530	1,561	0.0%
4201	Web-site development	1,500	1,500	1,530	1,561	0.0%
4215	Town Signs	500	500	600	612	0.0%
4990	Contingency	3,000	2,000	3,000	3,060	-33.3%
	Expenditure	64,865	62,725	63,873	65,047	-3.3%
	Net Expenditure over Income	59,865	56,725	58,873	60,047	-5.2%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
210	Democratic Services					
1335	Civic Dinner Income	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0.0%
	Income	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0.0%
4310	Election Expenses	10,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	-70.0%
4315	Mayors Allowance	1,500	1,500	1,500	5,000	0.0%
4330	Civic Events	2,500	3,000	3,000	5,000	20.0%
4335	Civic Dinner	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0.0%
	Expenditure	19,000	12,500	12,500	18,000	-34.2%
	Net Expenditure over Income	14,000	7,500	7,500	13,000	-46.4%
220	Grants					
4350	SYPRC - Utilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0.0%
4355	Hailey Centre - Utilities	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0.0%
4370	s137	75	75	75	75	0.0%
4375	Freedom of the Town	1,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	50.0%
4380	General Grants	2,500	3,500	3,500	3,500	40.0%
4580	Playschemes	1,000	0	0	0	-100.0%
	Expenditure	6,575	7,075	7,075	7,075	7.6%
	Net Expenditure over Income	6,575	7,075	7,075	7,075	7.6%
	Finance & Policy - Income	10,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	10.0%
	Finance & Policy - Expenditure	366,140	389,120	402,541	421,978	6.3%
	1&2. Finance & Policy Outcome	356,140	378,120	392,541	411,978	6.2%
Estates						
300	Civic Centre					
1400	Rental Income	800	800	800	800	0.0%
	Income	800	800	800	800	0.0%
4405	Rates	9,500	14,000	14,420	14,853	47.4%
4410	Heat & Light	10,000	10,000	10,300	10,609	0.0%
4415	Water	600	650	670	690	8.3%
4420	Maintenance	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0.0%
4425	Fixtures & Fittings	0	0	0	0	
4445	New Equipment	3,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	66.7%
	Expenditure	28,100	34,650	35,390	36,151	23.3%
	Net Expenditure over Income	27,300	33,850	34,590	35,351	24.0%
320	Hailey Centre					
1840	Recharged income	0	0	0	0	
1400	Rental Income	0	0	0	0	
	Income	0	0	0	0	
4420	Maintenance	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000	0.0%
	Expenditure	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000	0.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000	0.0%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
	330 Other Rented Accommodation					
1400	Rental Income	0	0	0		
	Income	0	0	0	0	
4400	Rent	3,425	4,800	4,992	5,192	40.1%
	Expenditure	3,425	4,800	4,992	5,192	40.1%
	Net Expenditure over Income	3,425	4,800	4,992	5,192	40.1%
	Estates - Income	800	800	800	800	0.0%
	Estates - Expenditure	36,525	44,450	45,382	47,343	21.7%
	3. Estates Outcome	35,725	43,650	44,582	46,543	22.2%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
Amenities						
400	Bullfields Allotment					
1500	Rent Income	850	910	928	947	7.1%
1510	Water Income	200	200	204	208	0.0%
	Income	1,050	1,110	1,132	1,155	5.7%
4415	Water	600	600	612	624	0.0%
4420	Maintenance	700	700	714	728	0.0%
	Expenditure	1,300	1,300	1,326	1,353	0.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	250	190	194	198	-24.0%
410	Bellmead Allotment					
1500	Rent Income	120	250	255	260	108.3%
1510	Water Income	30	30	31	31	0.0%
	Income	150	280	286	291	86.7%
4415	Water	100	100	102	104	0.0%
4420	Maintenance	250	250	255	260	0.0%
	Expenditure	350	350	357	364	0.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	200	70	71	73	-65.0%
420	Vantorts Allotment					
1500	Rent Income	125	175	130	133	40.0%
1510	Water Income	25	25	25	26	0.0%
	Income	150	200	155	158	33.3%
4415	Water	100	120	105	106	20.0%
4420	Maintenance	500	250	255	260	-50.0%
	Expenditure	600	370	360	366	-38.3%
	Net Expenditure over Income	450	170	205	208	-62.2%
430	Southbrook Allotment					
1400	Rent Income	900	1,290	1,316	936	43.3%
1410	Water Income	115	170	173	177	47.8%
	Income	1,015	1,460	1,489	1,113	43.8%
4315	Water	500	500	510	520	0.0%
4320	Maintenance	700	700	730	745	0.0%
	Expenditure	1,200	1,200	1,240	1,265	0.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	185	-260	-249	152	-240.5%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
435	West Road Allotment					
1400	Rent Income		640	653	666	
1410	Water Income		200	204	208	
	Income	0	840	857	874	
4315	Water		600	612	624	
4320	Maintenance		0	700	714	
	Set Up costs		3,500	0	0	
	Expenditure	0	4,100	1,312	1,338	
	Net Expenditure over Income	0	4,100	1,312	1,338	
	Allotments - Income	2,365	3,890	3,919	3,591	64.5%
	Allotments - Expenditure	3,450	7,320	4,595	4,686	112.2%
	Allotments Expenditure over Income	1,085	3,430	676	1,095	216.1%
440	Cemetery					
1550	Burial Fees	40,000	45,000	45,900	46,818	12.5%
1560	Memorial Fees	2,000	2,100	2,142	2,185	5.0%
1570	Grave Digging Income	1,200	2,500	2,550	2,601	108.3%
1580	Tree sales	2,700	2,700	2,754	2,809	0.0%
1581	Bench sales	3,000	3,000	3,060	3,121	0.0%
1582	Memorial Plaque Sales	500	900	918	936	80.0%
	Income	49,400	56,200	57,324	58,470	13.8%
4029	Salary Recharge					
4045	Subcontract Labour	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
4415	Water	150	150	153	156	0.0%
4420	Maintenance	5,000	5,000	5,100	5,202	0.0%
4440	New Area- Spinney	5,000	3,000	3,060	3,121	-40.0%
4520	Skip Hire	3,500	2,500	2,625	2,756	-28.6%
4530	Trees	360	550	561	572	52.8%
4531	Benches	2,000	2,000	2,040	2,081	0.0%
4532	Memorial plaques	300	550	561	572	83.3%
4675	Publicity/Marketing	500	500	510	520	0.0%
	Expenditure	17,810	15,250	15,630	16,021	-14.4%
	Net Expenditure over Income	(31,590)	(40,950)	(41,694)	(42,449)	29.6%
450	Playground					
4420	Maintenance	2,000	2,000	2,100	2,205	0.0%
4435	New Equipment	3,000	4,000	6,000	6,000	33.3%
	Expenditure	5,000	6,000	8,100	8,205	20.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	5,000	6,000	8,100	8,205	20.0%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
460	RHSOG Management					
4700	Maintenance	3,000	3,000	3,150	3,308	0.0%
	Expenditure	3,000	3,000	3,150	3,308	0.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	3,000	3,000	3,150	3,308	0.0%
	Amenities - Income	51,765	60,090	61,243	62,062	16.1%
	Amenities - Expenditure	29,260	31,570	31,475	32,220	7.9%
	4. Amenities Outcome	(22,505)	(28,520)	(29,768)	(29,842)	26.7%
Operations						
500	Groundsman					
1600	SYPRC Income	500	0	0	0	-100.0%
1603	Conveniences coin operation	800	800	800	800	0.0%
1610	Sub Contract watering	200	275	275	275	37.5%
	Income	1,500	1,075	1,075	1,075	-28.3%
4029	Salary Recharge- Bell St Toilet Clean	4,820	0	0	0	-100.0%
4600	Planters	1,000	1,000	1,030	1,061	0.0%
4601	Bell Street Toilets Cleaning	800	800	824	849	0.0%
4602	Bell Street Toilet Repairs	5,000	5,000	5,150	5,305	0.0%
4615	Rangers Mower	2,000	2,000	2,060	2,122	0.0%
4620	Rangers Tools	1,500	3,000	3,090	3,183	100.0%
4625	Mower replacement	13,000	12,000	0	0	
4630	CCTV Maintenance Agreement	2,200	3,000	3,090	3,183	36.4%
4635	CCTV Extension	3,000	3,000	3,090	3,183	0.0%
	Expenditure	33,320	29,800	18,334	18,884	-10.6%
	Operations - Income	1,500	1,075	1,075	1,075	-28.3%
	Operations - Expenditure	33,320	29,800	18,334	18,884	-10.6%
	5. Operations Outcome	31,820	28,725	17,259	17,809	-9.7%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
Events						
600	Fun on the Field					
1670	Event Income	900	900	900	900	0.0%
	Income	900	900	900	900	0.0%
4029	Staff Costs					
4045	Sub-contract Labour	800	800	840	882	0.0%
4670	Event Costs	1,300	1,000	1,050	1,103	-23.1%
4675	Publicity	200	200	210	221	0.0%
	Expenditure	2,300	2,000	2,100	2,205	-13.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	1,400	1,100	1,200	1,305	-21.4%
610	Events General					
4670	Event Costs	1,000	1,000	1,050	1,103	0.0%
	RHSO 300 Event		500	-	-	
	VE Day Events		5,000	-	-	
4675	Publicity	-	-	-	-	
	Expenditure	1,000	6,500	1,050	1,103	550.0%
	Net Expenditure over Income	1,000	6,500	1,050	1,103	550.0%
620	Christmas Festival					
1670	Event Income	500	800	800	500	60.0%
	Income	500	800	800	500	60.0%
4029	Staff Costs	-	-	-	-	
4045	Sub-contract Labour	1,200	1,700	1,785	1,874	41.7%
4670	Event Costs	1,500	1,000	1,050	1,103	-33.3%
4675	Publicity	500	500	525	551	0.0%
4685	Christmas Lights	15,000	15,000	15,750	16,538	0.0%
4690	Competitions	600	1,000	1,000	1,000	66.7%
	Expenditure	18,800	19,200	20,110	21,066	2.1%
	Net Expenditure over Income	18,300	18,400	19,310	20,566	0.5%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
630	Markets					
1670	Event Income	-	8,000	8,160	8,323	
	Income	-	8,000	8,160	8,323	
4029	Staff Costs					
	Car park Hire	-	9,000	9,180	9,364	
4675	Publicity	-	4,000	4,080	4,162	
	Expenditure	-	13,000	13,260	13,525	
	Net Expenditure over Income	-	5,000	5,100	5,202	
640	Projects					
4710	Hanging Baskets	1,500	1,500	1,530	1,561	0.0%
4715	Planters Project	500	500	510	520	0.0%
4720	Jubilee Gardens	10,000	95,000	30,000	2,000	850.0%
4725	Fair Green	1,200	2,000	2,040	2,081	66.7%
4735	Remembrance Day	400	400	408	416	0.0%
4740	War Memorial	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
	Expenditure	14,600	100,400	35,508	7,618	587.7%
	Net Expenditure over Income	14,600	100,400	35,508	7,618	587.7%
660	Town Selfie Walk / Travel challenge					
1680	Income (Other)	0	0	0	0	
	Income	0	0	0	0	
4029	Salary recharge	0	0	0	0	
4670	Event costs	500	575	587	598	15.0%
4675	Travel Challenge Publicity	350	200	204	208	-42.9%
4680	Promotional Equipment	1,000	1,000	1,020	1,040	0.0%
	Expenditure	1,850	1,775	1,811	1,847	-4.1%
	Net Expenditure over Income	1,850	1,775	1,811	1,847	-4.1%
670	River Day					
1680	Income (Other)	300	50	50	50	-83.3%
	Income	300	50	50	50	-83.3%
4670	Event costs	200	150	150	150	-25.0%
	Expenditure	200	150	150	150	-25.0%
	Events - Income	1,700	9,750	9,910	9,773	473.5%
	Events - Expenditure	38,750	143,025	73,989	47,513	269.1%
	6. Events Outcome	37,050	133,275	64,079	37,740	259.7%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
700	Sawbobus - YN66 YEE					
1150	Grants Received	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	0.0%
1151	STC Subsidy	-	-	-	-	
1800	Fares	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	0.0%
1820	Fuel Rebate	1,200	1,300	1,300	1,300	8.3%
1830	Sponsorship	5,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	20.0%
	Income	22,200	23,300	23,300	23,300	5.0%
4029	Salary	26,145	31,345	32,599	33,903	19.9%
4045	Sub contract labour	2,000	1,000	1,030	1,061	-50.0%
4800	Fuel	8,500	8,500	8,755	9,018	0.0%
4805	Maintenance	4,500	6,000	6,180	6,365	33.3%
4810	Tax & Insurance	1,500	1,550	1,597	1,644	3.3%
4815	Vehicle Hire	1,000	-	-	-	-100.0%
4816	Community Bus Reserve	-	-	15,000	15,000	
	Expenditure	43,645	48,395	65,160	66,991	10.9%
	7. Community Buses Outcome	21,445	25,095	41,860	43,691	17.0%
Other Vehicles						
800	Hire Bus - GL61 HFP					
1850	Vehicle Hire Income	500	500	500	500	0.0%
	Income	500	500	500	500	0.0%
4800	Fuel	500	550	567	583	10.0%
4805	Maintenance	1,200	1,250	1,288	1,326	4.2%
4810	Tax & Insurance	1,200	1,290	1,329	1,369	7.5%
	Expenditure	2,900	3,090	3,183	3,278	6.6%
	Net Expenditure over Income	2,400	2,590	2,683	2,778	7.9%
810	Ranger #1 Nissan - FT63 FWS					
4800	Fuel	2,000	2,000	2,060	2,122	0.0%
4805	Maintenance	1,500	1,500	1,545	1,591	0.0%
4810	Tax & Insurance	1,000	1,070	1,102	1,135	7.0%
	New Vehicle	0		5,000	5,000	
	Expenditure	4,500	4,570	9,707	9,848	1.6%
820	Ranger #2 Vauxhall SY65 ZFJ					
4800	Fuel	1,200	1,250	1,288	1,326	4.2%
4805	Maintenance	1,500	1,500	1,545	1,591	0.0%
4810	Tax & Insurance	1,000	1,080	1,112	1,146	8.0%
	Expenditure	3,700	3,830	3,945	4,063	3.5%
820	Net Expenditure over Income	3,700	3,830	3,945	4,063	3.5%
	Other Vehicles - Income	500	500	500	500	0.0%
	Other Vehicles - Expenditure	11,100	11,490	16,835	17,190	3.5%
	8. Other Vehicles Outcome	10,600	10,990	16,335	16,690	3.7%

Account	Title	2024-25 Approved Budget £	2025-26 Proposed Budget £	2026-27 Projected Budget £	2027-28 Projected Budget £	Incr/Decr %
Planning						
	910 Town Action Plan					
4910	TAP Costs	500	500	500	500	0.0%
	Expenditure	500	500	500	500	0.0%
	Planning - Expenditure	500	500	500	500	0.0%
	9. Planning Outcome	500	500	500	500	0.0%
Summary						
	Total Expenditure	559,240	698,350	654,215	652,619	24.9%
	Total Income	88,465	106,515	106,828	107,510	20.4%
	Council Outcome	470,775	591,835	547,387	545,109	25.7%
	To/From Reserves	(18,000)	(112,000)			
	NET COUNCIL OUTCOME	452,775	479,835	547,387	545,109	

Centre Account		2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
		Approved Budget £	Projected Budget £	Projected Budget £	Projected Budget £
1/2 Finance & Policy	Income	10,000	11,000	10,000	10,000
	Expenditure	366,140	389,120	402,541	421,978
	Net Expenditure	<u>356,140</u>	<u>378,120</u>	<u>392,541</u>	<u>411,978</u>
3 Estates	Income	800	800	800	800
	Expenditure	36,525	44,450	45,382	47,343
	Net Expenditure	<u>35,725</u>	<u>43,650</u>	<u>44,582</u>	<u>46,543</u>
4 Amenities	Income	51,765	60,090	61,243	62,062
	Expenditure	29,260	31,570	31,475	32,220
	Net Expenditure	<u>(22,505)</u>	<u>(28,520)</u>	<u>(29,768)</u>	<u>(29,842)</u>
5 Operations	Income	1,500	1,075	1,075	1,075
	Expenditure	33,320	29,800	18,334	18,884
	Net Expenditure	<u>31,820</u>	<u>28,725</u>	<u>17,259</u>	<u>17,809</u>
6 Events	Income	1,700	9,750	9,910	9,773
	Expenditure	38,750	143,025	73,989	47,513
	Net Expenditure	<u>37,050</u>	<u>133,275</u>	<u>64,079</u>	<u>37,740</u>
7 Community Buses	Income	22,200	23,300	23,300	23,300
	Expenditure	43,645	48,395	65,160	66,991
	Net Expenditure	<u>21,445</u>	<u>25,095</u>	<u>41,860</u>	<u>43,691</u>
8 Other Vehicles	Income	500	500	500	500
	Expenditure	11,100	11,490	16,835	17,190
	Net Expenditure	<u>10,600</u>	<u>10,990</u>	<u>16,335</u>	<u>16,690</u>
9 Planning	Income	-	-	-	-
	Expenditure	500	500	500	500
	Net Expenditure	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>500</u>
Total	Income	88,465	106,515	106,828	107,510
	Expenditure	559,240	698,350	654,215	652,619
	Net Expenditure	<u>470,775</u>	<u>591,835</u>	<u>547,387</u>	<u>545,109</u>
PLUS Transfers TO Earmarked Reserves					
PLUS Transfers TO General Reserves					
LESS Funded FROM Earmarked Reserves					
	EMR 320 Community Buses	(5,000)			
	EMR 345 Mower	(13,000)	(12,000)		
	EMR 340 Jubilee Gardens		(100,000)		
LESS Funded FROM General Reserves					
Funding Requirement - Precept		<u>452,775</u>	<u>479,835</u>	<u>547,387</u>	<u>545,109</u>
Tax Base		4,100.7	4,140.86	4,140.86	4,140.86
Band D Council Tax (pa)		£110.41	£115.88	£132.19	£131.64
Band D Council Tax (pw)		£2.12	£2.23	£2.54	£2.53
Band D Council Tax (pd)		£0.30	£0.32	£0.36	£0.36
Council Tax increase (%)		7.52%	4.95%	14.08%	-0.42%
Council Tax increase (£pa)		£7.72	£5.46	£16.31	-£0.55

Appendix D



SAWBRIDGEWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Approved by Full Town Council

To be amended by Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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These Financial Regulations were adopted by the council at its meeting held on 27th January 2025

1. General

- 1.1. These Financial Regulations govern the financial management of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council. They are one of the council's governing documents and shall be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders.
- 1.2. Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow these regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.3. Wilful breach of these regulations by an employee may result in disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.4. In these Financial Regulations:
 - 'Accounts and Audit Regulations' means the regulations issued under Sections 32, 43(2) and 46 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and then in force, unless otherwise specified.
 - "Approve" refers to an online action, allowing an electronic transaction to take place.
 - "Authorise" refers to a decision by the council, or a committee or an officer, to allow something to happen.
 - 'Proper practices' means those set out in *The Practitioners' Guide*
 - *Practitioners' Guide* refers to the guide issued by the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) and published by NALC.
 - 'Must' and **bold text** refer to a statutory obligation the council cannot change.
 - 'Shall' refers to a non-statutory instruction by the council to its members and staff.
- 1.5. The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office, appointed by the council. The Clerk has been appointed as RFO and these regulations apply accordingly. The RFO;
 - acts under the policy direction of the council;
 - administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
 - determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and control systems;
 - ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
 - ensures the accounting records are kept up to date;
 - seeks economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of council resources; and
 - produces financial management information as required by the council.
- 1.6. **The council must not delegate any decision regarding:**
 - **setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);**
 - **the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of its internal controls**

- **approving accounting statements;**
- **approving an annual governance statement;**
- **borrowing;**
- **declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and**
- **addressing recommendations from the internal or external auditors**

1.7. In addition, the council shall:

- determine and regularly review the bank mandate for all council bank accounts;
- authorise any grant or
- authorise any single commitment in excess of £20,000; and

2. Risk management and internal control

- 2.1. **The council must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control, which delivers effective financial, operational and risk management.**
- 2.2. The Clerk/RFO shall prepare, for review by the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee and approval by the council, a risk management policy covering all activities of the council. This policy and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 2.3. When considering any new activity, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration by the council.
- 2.4. **At least once a year, the council must review the effectiveness of its system of internal control, before approving the Annual Governance Statement.**
- 2.5. **The accounting control systems determined by the Clerk/RFO must include measures to:**
- **ensure that risk is appropriately managed;**
 - **ensure the prompt, accurate recording of financial transactions;**
 - **prevent and detect inaccuracy or fraud; and**
 - **allow the reconstitution of any lost records;**
 - **identify the duties of officers dealing with transactions and**
 - **ensure division of responsibilities.**
- 2.6. At least once in each quarter, and at each financial year end, a member (usually the Chair of the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee) shall be appointed to verify bank reconciliations (for all accounts) produced by the Clerk/RFO. The member shall sign and date the reconciliations and the original bank statements (or similar document) as evidence of this. This activity, including any exceptions, shall be reported to and noted by the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee.

- 2.7. Regular back-up copies shall be made of the records on any council computer and stored either online or in a separate location from the computer. The council shall put measures in place to ensure that the ability to access any council computer is not lost if an employee leaves or is incapacitated for any reason.

3. Accounts and audit

- 3.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the Clerk/RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.2. **The accounting records determined by the RFO must be sufficient to explain the council's transactions and to disclose its financial position with reasonable accuracy at any time. In particular, they must contain:**
- **day-to-day entries of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which they relate;**
 - **a record of the assets and liabilities of the council;**
- 3.3. The accounting records shall be designed to facilitate the efficient preparation of the accounting statements in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).
- 3.4. The Clerk/RFO shall complete and certify the annual Accounting Statements of the council contained in the AGAR in accordance with proper practices, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year. Having certified the Accounting Statements, the Clerk/RFO shall submit them (with any related documents) to the council, within the timescales required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 3.5. **The council must ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and internal control system in accordance with proper practices.**
- 3.6. **Any officer or member of the council must make available such documents and records as the internal or external auditor consider necessary for the purpose of the audit** and shall, as directed by the council, supply the Clerk/RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary.
- 3.7. The internal auditor shall be appointed by Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee and shall carry out their work to evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes in accordance with proper practices specified in the Practitioners' Guide.
- 3.8. The council shall ensure that the internal auditor:
- is competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
 - reports to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one written report during each financial year;
 - can demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and

- has no involvement in the management or control of the council

3.9. Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:

- perform any operational duties for the council;
- initiate or approve accounting transactions;
- provide financial, legal or other advice including in relation to any future transactions; or
- direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the internal auditor.

3.10. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as described in The Practitioners Guide.

3.11. The Clerk/RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts, including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and documents required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

3.12. The Clerk/RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from internal or external auditors.

4. Budget and precept

4.1. **Before setting a precept, the council must calculate its council tax/budget requirement for each financial year by preparing and approving a budget, in accordance with The Local Government Finance Act 1992 or succeeding legislation.**

4.2. Budgets for salaries and wages, including employer contributions shall be reviewed by the council at least annually usually in October/November for the following financial year and the final version shall be evidenced by a hard copy schedule signed by the Clerk and the Chair of the Council or relevant committee. The Clerk/RFO will inform committees of any salary implications before they consider their draft their budgets.

4.3. No later than December each year, the Clerk/RFO shall prepare a draft budget with detailed estimates of all income and expenditure for the following financial year along with a forecast for the following three financial years, taking account of the lifespan of assets and cost implications of repair or replacement.

4.4. Unspent budgets for completed projects shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Unspent funds for partially completed projects may only be carried forward by placing them in an earmarked reserve with the formal approval of the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee

4.5. Each committee shall review its draft budget and submit any proposed amendments to the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee not later than the end of November each year.

- 4.6. The draft budget with any committee proposals and three-year forecast, including any recommendations for the use or accumulation of reserves, shall be considered by the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee and a recommendation made to full council no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.7. Having considered the proposed budget and three-year forecast, the council shall determine its council tax requirement by setting a budget. The council shall set a precept for this amount no later than the end of January for the ensuing financial year.
- 4.8. **Any member with council tax unpaid for more than two months is prohibited from voting on the budget or precept by Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and must and must disclose at the start of the meeting that Section 106 applies to them.**
- 4.9. The Clerk/RFO shall **issue the precept to the billing authority no later than the end of February** and supply each member with a copy of the agreed annual budget.
- 4.10. The agreed budget provides a basis for monitoring progress during the year by comparing actual spending and income against what was planned.
- 4.11. Any addition to, or withdrawal from, any earmarked reserve shall be agreed by Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee.

5. Procurement

- 5.1. **Members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.** Any officer procuring goods, services or works should ensure, as far as practicable, that the best available terms are obtained, usually by obtaining prices from several suppliers.
- 5.2. The Clerk/RFO should verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before it is made and in the case of new or infrequent purchases, should ensure that the legal power being used is reported to the meeting at which the order is authorised and also recorded in the minutes.
- 5.3. Every contract shall comply with the council's Standing Orders and these Financial Regulations and no exceptions shall be made, except in an emergency.
- 5.4. **For a contract for the supply of goods, services or works where the estimated value will exceed the thresholds set by Parliament, the full requirements of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or any superseding legislation ("the Legislation"), must be followed in respect of the tendering, award and notification of that contract.**
- 5.5. Where the estimated value is below the Government threshold, the council shall (with the exception of items listed in paragraph 5.12) obtain prices as follows:
- 5.6. For contracts estimated to exceed £60,000 including VAT, the Clerk shall seek formal tenders from at least three suppliers agreed by the council and advertise an

open invitation for tenders in compliance with any relevant provisions of the Legislation if required. Tenders shall be invited in accordance with Appendix 1.

- 5.7. **For contracts estimated to be over £30,000 including VAT, the council must comply with any requirements of the Legislation¹ regarding the advertising of contract opportunities and the publication of notices about the award of contracts.**
- 5.8. For contracts greater than £3,000 excluding VAT the Clerk/RFO shall seek at least 3 fixed-price quotes.
- 5.9. where the value is between £1,000 and £3,000 excluding VAT, the Clerk/RFO shall try to obtain 3 estimates (which might include evidence of online prices, or recent prices from regular suppliers.)
- 5.10. For smaller purchases, the Clerk/RFO shall seek to achieve value for money.
- 5.11. **Contracts must not be split into smaller lots to avoid compliance with these rules.**
- 5.12. The requirement to obtain competitive prices in these regulations need not apply to contracts that relate to items (i) to (iv) below:
- i. specialist services, such as legal professionals acting in disputes;
 - ii. repairs to, or parts for, existing machinery or equipment;
 - iii. works, goods or services that constitute an extension of an existing contract;
 - iv. goods or services that are only available from one supplier or are sold at a fixed price.
- 5.13. When applications are made to waive this financial regulation to enable a price to be negotiated without competition, the reason should be set out in a recommendation to the council. Avoidance of competition is not a valid reason.
- 5.14. The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 5.15. Individual purchases within an agreed budget for that type of expenditure may be authorised by:
- the Clerk, under delegated authority, for any items £10,000 and below excluding VAT.
 - the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the appropriate committee, for any items above £10,000 excluding VAT.
 - a duly delegated committee of the council for all items of expenditure within their delegated budgets for items above £15,000 excluding VAT
 - all grants will be approved by Council.
 - the council for all items over £20,000;

¹ The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website if they advertise contract opportunities and also to publicise the award of contracts over £30,000 including VAT, regardless of whether they were advertised.

Such authorisation must be supported by a minute (in the case of council or committee decisions) or other auditable evidence trail.

- 5.16. No individual member, or informal group of members may issue an official order, unless instructed to do so in advance by a resolution of the council or make any contract on behalf of the council.
- 5.17. No expenditure may be authorised that will exceed the budget for that type of expenditure other than by resolution of the council or a duly delegated committee acting within its Terms of Reference except in an emergency.
- 5.18. In cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises, the clerk may authorise expenditure of up to £5,000 excluding VAT on repair, replacement or other work that in their judgement is necessary, whether or not there is any budget for such expenditure. The Clerk shall report such action to the Chair as soon as possible and to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 5.19. No expenditure shall be authorised, no contract entered into or tender accepted in relation to any major project, unless the council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available and that where a loan is required, Government borrowing approval has been obtained first.
- 5.20. An official Purchase Order shall be issued for all work, goods and services above £250 excluding VAT unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained, along with evidence of receipt of goods.
- 5.21. Any ordering system can be misused and access to them shall be controlled by the Clerk/RFO.

6. Banking and payments

- 6.1. The council's banking arrangements, including the bank mandate, shall be made by the Clerk/RFO and authorised by the council; banking arrangements shall not be delegated to a committee. The council has resolved to bank with Lloyds Bank. The arrangements shall be reviewed at least annually for security and efficiency.
- 6.2. The council must have safe and efficient arrangements for making payments, to safeguard against the possibility of fraud or error. Wherever possible, more than one person should be involved in any payment, for example by dual online authorisation or dual cheque signing. Even where a purchase has been authorised, the payment must also be authorised and only authorised payments shall be approved or signed to allow the funds to leave the council's bank.
- 6.3. All invoices for payment should be examined for arithmetical accuracy and analysed to the appropriate expenditure heading by the Finance Officer, and then verified to confirm that the work, goods or services were received, checked and represent expenditure previously authorised by the council before being certified by the Clerk/RFO.

- 6.4. Personal payments (including salaries, wages, expenses and any payment made in relation to the termination of employment) may be summarised to avoid disclosing any personal information.
- 6.5. All payments shall be made by online banking or cheque, in accordance with a resolution of the council.
- 6.6. For each financial year the Clerk/RFO will draw up a schedule of regular payments due in relation to a continuing contract or obligation which the council may authorise in advance for the year.
- 6.7. A copy of this schedule of regular payments shall be signed by two members on each and every occasion when payment is made - to reduce the risk of duplicate payments.
- 6.8. A list of such payments shall be reported to the next appropriate meeting of the council for information only.
- 6.9. The Clerk/RFO shall have delegated authority to authorise payments in the following circumstances:
 - i. any payments of up to £10,000 excluding VAT, within an agreed budget.
 - ii. payments of up to £5,000 excluding VAT in cases of serious risk to the delivery of council services or to public safety on council premises.
 - iii. any payment necessary to avoid a charge under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 {or to comply with contractual terms}, where the due date for payment is before the next scheduled meeting of [the council], where the [Clerk and RFO] certify that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of council {or finance committee}.
 - iv. Fund transfers within the councils banking arrangements up to the sum of £10,000, provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee.
- 6.10. The Clerk/RFO shall present a schedule of payments requiring authorisation, forming part of the agenda for the meeting, to the Council or Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee. The council or committee shall review the schedule for compliance. The authorised schedule shall be initialled immediately below the last item by the person chairing the meeting. A detailed list of all payments shall be disclosed within or as an attachment to the minutes of that meeting, excluding detailed payments of individual staff members' salaries.

7. Electronic payments

- 7.1. Where internet banking arrangements are made with any bank, the Clerk/RFO shall be appointed as the Service Administrator. The bank mandate agreed by the council shall identify two councillors who will be authorised to approve transactions on those accounts and a minimum of two people will be involved in any online approval process. The Clerk may be an authorised signatory, but no signatory should be involved in approving any payment to themselves.

- 7.2. All authorised signatories shall have access to view the council's bank accounts online.
- 7.3. No employee or councillor shall disclose any PIN or password, relevant to the council or its banking, to anyone not authorised in writing by the council or a duly delegated committee.
- 7.4. The Service Administrator shall set up all items due for payment online. A list of payments for approval, together with copies of the relevant invoices, shall be sent by email to two authorised signatories.
- 7.5. In the prolonged absence of the Service Administrator an authorised signatory shall set up any payments due before the return of the Service Administrator.
- 7.6. Two councillors who are authorised signatories shall check the payment details against the invoices before approving each payment.
- 7.7. Evidence shall be retained showing which members approved the payment online and a printout of the transaction confirming that the payment has been made shall be appended to the invoice for audit purposes.
- 7.8. A full list of all payments made in a month shall be provided to the next council meeting.
- 7.9. With the approval of the council in each case, regular payments (such as gas, electricity, telephone, broadband, water, National Non-Domestic Rates, refuse collection, pension contributions and HMRC payments) may be made by variable direct debit, provided that the instructions are signed/approved by two authorised members. The approval of the use of each variable direct debit shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.
- 7.10. Payment may be made by BACS or CHAPS by resolution of the finance committee provided that each payment is approved by two authorised bank signatories, evidence is retained and any payments are reported to the council at the next meeting. The approval of the use of BACS or CHAPS shall be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years.
- 7.11. If thought appropriate by the council, regular payments of fixed sums may be made by banker's standing order, provided that the instructions are signed by two members, evidence of this is retained and any payments are reported to council when made. The approval of the use of a banker's standing order shall be reviewed by the council at least every two years.
- 7.12. Account details for suppliers may only be changed upon written notification by the supplier verified by the Clerk and Chair of Finance Committee. This is a potential area for fraud and the individuals involved should ensure that any change is genuine. Data held should be checked with suppliers every two years.
- 7.13. Members and officers shall ensure that any computer used for the council's financial business has adequate security, with anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall software installed and regularly updated.

7.14. Remembered password facilities (other than secure password stores requiring separate identity verification) should not be used on any computer used for council banking.

8. Cheque payments

- 8.1. Cheques or orders for payment in accordance with a resolution or delegated decision shall be signed by two members and countersigned by the Clerk
- 8.2. A signatory having a family or business relationship with the beneficiary of a payment shall not, under normal circumstances, be a signatory to that payment.
- 8.3. To indicate agreement of the details on the cheque with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall also initial the cheque counterfoil and invoice.
- 8.4. Cheques or orders for payment shall not normally be presented for signature other than at, or immediately before or after a council or Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee meeting. Any signatures obtained away from council meetings shall be reported to the council or Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee at the next convenient meeting.

9. Payment cards

- 9.1. Any Debit Card issued for use will be specifically restricted to the Clerk/RFO and will also be restricted to a single transaction maximum value of £500 unless authorised by council or finance committee in writing before any order is placed.
- 9.2. Any corporate credit card or trade card account opened by the council will be specifically restricted to use by the Clerk and Finance Officer and any balance shall be paid in full each month.
- 9.3. Personal credit or debit cards of members or staff shall not be used except for expenses of up to [£250] including VAT, incurred in accordance with council policy.

10. Petty Cash

- 10.1. The Clerk/RFO shall maintain a petty cash float not exceeding £500 and may provide petty cash to officers for the purpose of defraying operational and other expenses.
 - a) Vouchers for payments made from petty cash shall be kept, along with receipts to substantiate every payment.
 - b) Cash income received must not be paid into the petty cash float but must be separately banked, as provided elsewhere in these regulations.
 - c) Payments to maintain the petty cash float shall be shown separately on any schedule of payments presented for approval.

11. Payment of salaries and allowances

- 11.1. **As an employer, the council must make arrangements to comply with the statutory requirements of PAYE legislation.**
- 11.2. **Councillors allowances (where paid) are also liable to deduction of tax under PAYE rules and must be taxed correctly before payment.** No Councillor allowances are currently made.

- 11.3. Salary rates shall be agreed by the council, or the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee. No changes shall be made to any employee's gross pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the council or relevant committee.
- 11.4. Payment of salaries shall be made, after deduction of tax, national insurance, pension contributions and any similar statutory or discretionary deductions, on the dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 11.5. Deductions from salary shall be paid to the relevant bodies within the required timescales, provided that each payment is reported, as set out in these regulations above.
- 11.6. Each payment to employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall be recorded in a payroll control account or other separate confidential record, with the total of such payments each calendar month reported in the cashbook. Payroll reports will be reviewed by [the finance committee] to ensure that the correct payments have been made.
- 11.7. Any termination payments shall be supported by a report to the council, setting out a clear business case. Termination payments shall only be authorised by the full council.
- 11.8. Before employing interim staff, the council must consider a full business case.

12. Loans and investments

- 12.1. Any application for Government approval to borrow money and subsequent arrangements for a loan must be authorised by the full council and recorded in the minutes. All borrowing shall be in the name of the council and in accordance with the Council's Investment and Financial Management Strategy, which is attached hereto at Appendix B
- 12.2. Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase, Leasing of tangible assets or loans to be repaid within the financial year) must be authorised by the full council, following a written report on the value for money of the proposed transaction.
- 12.3. The council's Investment Policy shall be in accordance with Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments, and written be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. The Investment Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 12.4. All investment of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 12.5. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the Clerk/RFO.
- 12.6. Payments in respect of short term or long-term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, shall be made in accordance with these regulations.

13. Income

- 13.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the Clerk/RFO.
- 13.2. The council will review all fees and charges for work done, services provided, or goods sold at least annually as part of the budget-setting process, following a report of the Clerk or other relevant officer. The Clerk/RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all amounts due to the council.
- 13.3. Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council by the Clerk/RFO and shall be written off in the year. The council's approval shall be shown in the accounting records.
- 13.4. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be deposited intact with the council's bankers, with such frequency as the Clerk/RFO considers necessary. The origin of each receipt shall clearly be recorded on the paying-in slip or other record.
- 13.5. Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 13.6. The Clerk/RFO shall ensure that VAT is correctly recorded in the council's accounting software and that any VAT Return required is submitted from the software by the due date.
- 13.7. Where significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the Clerk/RFO shall ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control record such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken for the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

14. Payments under contracts for building or other construction works

- 14.1. Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the Clerk/RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments, which shall be made within the time specified in the contract based on signed certificates from the architect or other consultant engaged to supervise the works.
- 14.2. Any variation of, addition to or omission from a contract must be authorised by the Clerk to the contractor in writing, with the council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the contract sum by 5% or more, or likely to exceed the budget available.

15. Stores and equipment

- 15.1. The Clerk/RFO shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment.
- 15.2. Delivery notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

16. Assets, properties and estates

- 16.1. The Clerk shall make arrangements for the safe custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council.

- 16.2. The Clerk/RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date, with a record of all properties held by the council, their location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held, in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 16.3. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.
- 16.4. No interest in land shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a written report shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate where required by law).
- 16.5. No tangible moveable property shall be purchased or otherwise acquired, sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, except where the estimated value of any one item does not exceed £500. In each case a written report shall be provided to council with a full business case.

17. Insurance

- 17.1. The Clerk/RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered, reviewing these annually before the renewal date in conjunction with the council's review of risk management.
- 17.2. The Clerk/RFO will give prompt notification to the insurers of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 17.3. The Clerk/RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability, damage or event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to the council at the next available meeting. The Clerk/RFO shall negotiate all claims on the council's insurers.
- 17.4. All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the council, or the Finance, Policy & Economic Development Committee.

18. Suspension and revision of Financial Regulations

- 18.1. The council shall review these Financial Regulations annually and following any change of Clerk or RFO. The Clerk shall monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and advise the council of any need to amend these Financial Regulations.
- 18.2. The council may, by resolution duly notified prior to the relevant meeting of council, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations, provided that reasons for the suspension are recorded and that an assessment of the risks arising has been presented to all members. Suspension does not disapply any legislation or permit the council to act unlawfully.

18.3. The council may temporarily amend these Financial Regulations by a duly notified resolution, to cope with periods of absence, local government reorganisation, national restrictions or other exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 1 - Tender process

- 1) Any invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.
- 2) The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post, unless an electronic tendering process has been agreed by the council.
- 3) Where a postal process is used, each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract. All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
- 4) Where an electronic tendering process is used, the council shall use a specific email address that will be monitored to ensure that nobody accesses any tender before the expiry of the deadline for submission.
- 5) Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to Standing Order Point 18 FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 6) Where the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated and the council requires further pricing, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision-making process was being undertaken.
- 7) All tenders over 50,000 should be agreed by Full council

Risk Assessment copy available on the night of the meeting

Appendix E

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

Memorandum from the Town Clerk

To: Finance, Policy and Economic Development Committee
 From: Christopher Hunt
 Subject: Income and expenditure report
 Date: 3rd January 2025

Executive Summary

This report explains variances up to and including Month 9 in this financial year 2024/25. I will note any variance over 100% of accumulative payments.

Budget code	Budgeted	Expenditure	Variance	Explanation
200 General Administration				
4115 Insurance	£10,000	£15,000	+£5000	The insurance is a one off payment and bridges the financial year. When this is spread across the twelve months as monthly payments the budgeted amount is correct. Part of this also includes the Hailey Centre buildings insurance which is recouped annually
4215 Town Signs	£500	£949	+ £449	One off payment for airfield replacement brown tourist signs
220 Grants				
4375 Freedom of the Town	£1,000	£1,224	+ £224	Small overspend to buy a number of medals for a number of years for future ceremonies.
300 Civic Centre				
4405 Rates	£9,500	£11,001	+ £1,551	Increase in rates for Council building
330 Other rented accommodation				
4400 Rent	£3,425	£3,495	+ £70	Storage charges, alternative storage is being explored to reduce this expenditure for 2025/26
400 Bullfields Allotment				
4415 Water	£600	£511	+ £89	Bill has been estimated and meter readings now supplied as figure appears excessive.
420 Vantorts				

Allotments				
4415 Water	£100	£148	+£48	Estimated water bill and readings now supplied.
500 Groundsman				
4630 CCTV maintenance agreement	£2,200	£2,453	+ £253	Increase in charges due to additional equipment installed this financial year.
620 Christmas Festival				
4045 Subcontracted Labour	£1,200	£1,446		Extra staff needed to assist in building and breaking down event. Taken into consideration for next years event.
800 GL61 Bus				
4800 Fuel	£500	£2,715	- £2,215	Second bus used as Sawbobus out of service for extended period for repair. Sawbobus has £8,500 budgeted for fuel and only £2,883 used.
820 Rangers Truck No2				
4810 Veh Tax and Insurance	£1,000	£1,074		Insurance slight increase.

Christopher Hunt

Sawbridgeworth Town Clerk